CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

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Dichopogon strictus
'Chocolate lily'

BIRDIES AT THE GOLF COURSE IN AUGUST

by Stan Bruton

Having not visited my bird friends at the 'Maine Links since my own Winter 'migration' in June, I at last got out there at about 7.30 am on Aug. 23rd.

At the car-park I was interested to see how the Red Wattle Birds dominated the four lovely blossoming Yellow Gums near the Club House, relentlessly chasing the smaller Fuscous Honeyeaters away, though a couple of White-naped Honeys were working hard, un-noticed and undisturbed, on my side of the trees.

The usually dominant Noisy Miners were not within a hundred metres of their usual domain, though there were plenty at the far northern end of the course, sharing the wealth of an even more lovely crimson Red Ironbark with a small flock of Yellow-tufted Honeys and a few brilliant Musk Lorikeets.

Grey-crowned Babblers seemed to be pairing off. A pair were on the green near the Club House, and babbled off into the roadside gums. Another pair up near the northern end refused to be fright-

ened away from their beginnings of a nest. The other 5 or 6 were heard, and later seen, on the south side of the road.

The Noisy Miners, up beyond the big dams, attracted my attention with a sudden chorus of shrill piping cries. I thought at first that I must be mistaken in thinking it was a 'Flying Predator' warning, but within a minute a sleek brown Falcon flew across amongst the tree tops.

Also at the northern end a vaguely familiar sweet song blended with the cheery call of a Grey Shrike-thrush. There on th e wire fence sat a demure little grey-brown bird, recognisable by the song and by the white outer tail feathers, as a Jacky Winter welcoming the first signs of spring.

The Blue Fairy-wrens were missing from the banks of the overflowing dams, but a fully-dressed beauty was flaunting his colour by the road bridge, back near'Dales Folly'. Several more were at the far end of the south side, sharing the Mamuka and the Cootamundras with a Striated Thornbill and several Yellow-rumped Thornbills.

The clucking calls of Long-billed Corellas drew my attention just as six of them flew into a small dead tree away back near the bridge, making it look like an exotic spring blossom tree.

Again I heard the Noisy Miners crying 'Hawk', but this time it was only a lone Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike flying in above the tree tops, looking much like a Little Falcon (now referred to by the experts as the Australian Hobby).

I am finding much interest lately in identifying birds by their calls, and am well satisfied these days to record in my field-book birds that I have been able to identify this way, so I often have an (H) after a name indicating that it has been heard. And so this morning I have noted 'Kookaburra H'; Grey Thrush calling but no nest in the engine shed yet; Ravens (Little?) H in distance.'

So also it was his musical chirrup that attracted my attention to the one and only 'Grassy' (Red-rumped Parrot) seen this morning, so also it was with the not-so-musical Babblers.

I once this morning wondered momentarily whether it was an ambulance or a police car in the distance. Then I realised that it was one of the many varied calls of the Grey-crowned Babblers.

Other species observed during my two hour ramble were - Magpies, Eastern Rosellas, Starlings, Magpie-larks, Black Ducks (2 on the wing), Welcome Swallows, Hoary-headed Grebe, Masked Lapwings(Spur-winged Plovers), Galahs, Willy Wagtails and one silent Grey Currawong; a total of 29 species.

Snakes.

Concluding a series by Terry Collins.

By far the largest of Australian snakes is the 'ELAPIDAE' with about 63 species. Elapid snakes all have fangs at the front of the mouth, connected by a duct to a venom gland which is a modified salivary gland. All Elapid snakes are venemous but only a few are large enough or have powerful enough venom to be a threat to man. Elapid snakes do occur on other continents and include the coral snakes and cobras, but Australia has the greatest diversity and the deadliest species. Australia does not have any vipers or rattlesnakes of the family 'VIPERIDEA' which have long,efficient fangs. Elapid fangs by contrast are relatively small and immobile, and so some of the larger species have deweloped extremely toxic venoms to compensate. Each species has a different venom, and will produce produce a different clinical picture in the victim. There is a basic similarity between these complex venoms. The main components are neurotoxins, haemotoxins and various enzymes. In fact most of the dangerous venoms are composed of many different toxins. More than 25 enzymes alone have been isolated from these venoms, in many there is not one neurotoxin, but several different neurotoxins, all acting in different ways to cause paralysis of voluntary muscles. Some, like Sea-snake venom, also cause destruction of the muscle. The haemotoxins are the group of toxins which cause the blood clotting mechanism to go wrong, from massive clotting of the blood to total unclottability. Also, some toxins Cause the blood cells to fragment. Certain toxins have an effect on the kidneys and heart functions. Thus in some cases heart failure and kidney failure may complicate an already bad situation in the victim. Only a few of Australia's elapid snakes are dangerous. They are all large, usually over a metre in length. The exception to this is the Death Adder, a very distinctive short, fat snake with a large triangular head and a short thin tail which is used as a lure to attract prey. It is found mainly in sandy, scrubby areas where it often hides under debris or leaf litter with just the tail lure exposed, immediatly in front of the mouth. Most Australian snakes will rapidly move away on the approach of man but the Death Adder more commonly stays put, hoping its camouflage will conceal it; it is therefore more likely to be trodden on by the careless walker than the other types.

The other dangerous Australian elapids are:-

1/ The Brown snake and some of the other members of its genus including the Western Brown snake or Gwardar and the Dugite.

2/ The Black snake genus, including the Red-bellied Black snake and the King Brown or Mulga snake, the former being less

dangerous than the other elapids.
3/ The Tiger snakes, including the Black Tiger snake found on the Islands off Southern Australia and isolated pockets on the main-land.
4/ The Copperheads, usually found in the damper areas in South=ern Australia.
5/ The Rough-scale snake of Queensland. a smallish species.
6/The Taipan of Northeastern Australia from southern Queensland to the Northern Territory, and one of the world's deadliest snakes.
7/ The Small-scaled or Fierce snake, a large Taipan-like snake from eastern Central Australia. This species has only recently been re-recognised and its venom found to be so toxic that it is probably potentially the deadliest snake in the world,

Fortunately, in view of the lethality of the venoms most dangerous Australian elapid snakes are secretive creatures, disinclined to attack, and often when they bite they don't inject a significant amount of venom. With adequate First Aid plus the back-up of anti-venenes to cover all types of snake bite there is now little chance of serious results to the victim. The careful Field Naturalist should never be bitten by a snake. He, or she, will always watch where they are walking, will not walk around at night in bare feet and without a torch, will have goodboots and gaiters or thickish long trouserswhen walking through long grass or scrub. If a snake is seen let its go its own way and make no attempt to kill it. Dont try to catch a snake with a battered felt hat like a well-known television naturalist. It's a sure way to get bitten.

NEW PLANT SPECIES RECORDED FOR THE CASTLEMAINE AREA

A pea plant, previously unrecorded here, has been found near the railway-line and on Crown land between North Castlemaine and Barkers Creek . It is Variable Swainsonia, Swainsonia oroboides

Boronia at Muckleford

Geoff Sitch reported last month that he had visited the Boronia spot at Muckleford, and was able to report that a large number of last year's seedlings are 6"- 8" high despite the drought, and that there are more that have germinated this year. Rice flower and Tetratheca were also shooting from the base - this seems to be the case throughout much of the bush.

Audrey Bruton told of a flock of about 20 wh ite naped honeyeaters at their place, feeding mainly in the Lucerne tree

THE SHOW DAY WALK

Eight of us set out to walk from the Flower Reserve on the Ridge Road to the Monk (nine set out, but one, only 17 months old, proudly rode most of the way on Daddy's back). The day was overcast, but pleasant, and there was only a little drizzley rain, which made ideal walking conditions.

Before we set out in earnest we decided to have a look at the very pleasant little reserve which is well fenced, but the stile was decidedly ricketty, and the club decided at the Committee meeting to look into renewing it.

There were several highlights. One was coming onto a well preserved stone cottage - wheel tracks across the creek showed that someone knows of it. Another very special thrill was Maggie Oliver's discovery of an old man Koala. His stiff back and haughty manner suggested he wasn't as thrilled as we were!

There were a lot of lil ies and orchids, especially as we got towards Chewton, but, in general, as with the rest of the bush the shrubs were not flowering as well as usual.

Among the rarer beauties amongst the flowers was a pure clear yellow Diurus orchid, similar to a Leopard orchid without the spots and a clump of rich purple-blue Blue Fairies, both seen on the Monk

The walk was longer than usual, and we were tired by the time we reached Eureka Street to phone for a ride home, but the medal for endurance would have to go to Ian Higgins who carried his small son on his bac k in a baby pack almost the whole distance!
Here is a list of the flowers seen on the trip (there were many more plants, but not in flower)

Bushy Parrot Pea	Dillwynia rammosissima (this species has not been recorded for Victoria, though it also occurs at North Castlemaine)
Cat's Claws	Grevillea alpina
Common Beard Heath	Leucopogon virgatus
Twin-flower Beard Heath	L. biflorus
Fairy Wax	Eriostemon verrucosus
Pink bells	Tetratheca ciliata
False Sarsparilla	Hardenvergia violacea
Spike Wattle	Acaciaoxycedrus
Common Heath	Epacris impressa
Billy Buttons	Craspedia glauca
Tall Sundew	Drossera auriculata
Pale Sundew	D. peltata
Climbing Sundew	D. planchonii
Erect Guinea Flower	Hibbertia stricta
Wattle Matrush	Lomandra filiformis

Yam Daisy	Microseris scapigera
Riceflower	Pimelea glauca (?)
Golden Wattle	Acacia pycnantha
White Marianth	
Showy Parrot-pea	Dillwynia sericea
Silky Tea-tree	Leptospermum myrsinoides
Handsome Flat-pea	Platylobium formosum
Daphne heath	Brachyloma daphnoides
Silver Wattle	Acacia dealbata
Native Pansy	Goodenia sp.
Sweet Bursaria	Bursaria spinosa (usually flowers in Summer)
Furze Bitter-pea	Davisia ulicifolia
Correa	Correa reflexa
Gold-dust Wattle	Acacia acinacia
Early Nancy (1000 s!)	Anguilaria dioica
Candles	Stackhousia monogyna
Grass Trigger Plant	Stylidium graminifolium

Orchids

Blue Faries	Caledénia difformis
Tall Greenhood	Pterostylus longifolia
Waxlip	Glossodia major
Red Spider-orchid	Caledenia pattersonia, var. concolor
Pink fingers	C. carnea
Blue Caledénia	C. cerulea
Leopard Orchid	Diurus maculata
Nodding Greenhood	P. nutans
Blunt Greenhood	P. curta
Musky Caledenia	C. angustata

THE 150th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Council has written to the Club asking for some specia effort to be made by the Club for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations in November 1985.

The Committee is asking members for suggestions.

One suggestion was that we lead excursions to show the public what the bush may have been like 150 years ago.

IDEAS ARE WANTED SOON as the Council wants to make up a draught calendar of events as soon as possible.

From Dr J.C. McIlroy
Research Scientist with CSIRO

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am studying the ecology of the common wombat, *Vombatus ursinus*, in Australia. One aspect of particular interest that requires further investigation is its distribution, particularly in Victoria. Present data indicates that in this region wombats are often not as widespread as assumed, but tend to occur only in certain areas; their range is also contracting to the north and west. One of my objectives is to find out the reasons underlying this pattern of distribution.

Can you provide me with the following information?

1. Reasonably precise locations/areas in which you know wombats occur (or equally, do not occur, e.g. area enclosed by towns S, Y and Z or parts of mountain range, or along section of river or creek). Even a sketch map would be helpful.

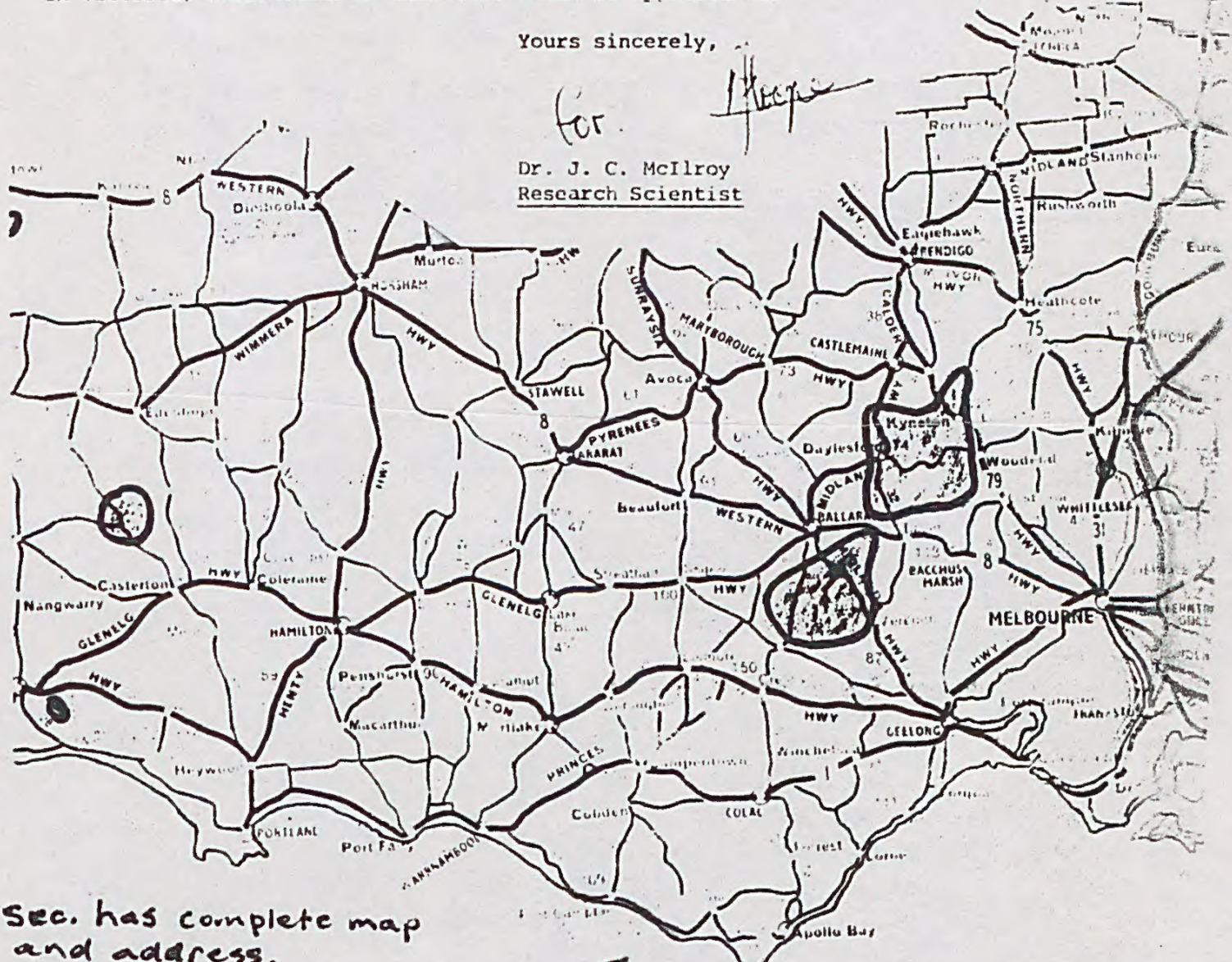
2. Locations/areas in which wombats have occurred in the past (i.e. since European settlement) but no longer occur and, if possible, approximate date of disappearance.

Enclosed is a draft map of their currently-known distribution in Victoria; corrections or additions would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

for.

Dr. J. C. McIlroy
Research Scientist



Sec. has complete map and address.

CLUB PROGRAMME

MEETINGS

October Friday 14 - Birds of the Gulf Country. Maggie Oliver High School, Lawson Parade.
Thursday 22 - Business meeting, Ed Centre.

November Friday 11 - Reserves and the Castlemaine District. Speaker, Mr Geoff Gerdsen, Lands Deptl Ranger. At the High School.
Thursday 24 - Business meeting, Ed Centre.

December Friday 9 - Members and Visitors Night. Have you started planning yet? This is our Christmas Break-up.

OUTINGS

October NOTE THE DATE Saturday 8 th - Mt Lofty near Redesdale We will be visiting a block of bush not previously visited by the Club. Leave the S.E.C. 1.30 pm sharp. Leader E Perkins.
Saturday and Sunday 15 -16 Oct. Bacchus Marsh Campout.

November Saturday12 - Mt Franklin North. Maryborough Club has been invited to Join us. Leave S.E.C. 1.30 sharp.

WEDNESDAY EVENING EXCURSIONS

Leave meeting places at 4.15.

October 12 Campbells Creek. Crown Lands Reserve. Meet at Campbells Creek School. Leaders G.,Gerdsen, E. Perkins.
19 Harcourt Reserve. Meet at the Band Room, cr Barker and Myring Streets. Leader F. Blake
26 Crocodile Res. Road. Meet Westley Hill Hall. Leader G. Broadway.

November 2 Goughs Range (South of Tarrengower) Meet Gingell St side of the Railway Station.

General Meetings start at 8pm, 'though the room is open 20 minutes before that. Committee Meetings are at 7.30pm and any members are welcome to attend. It is not a closed meeting.

COMMITTEE

President	Mr G. Broadway	72 2513
Hon Sec	Mrs S. Bruton	72 3050
Treasurer	Mr F. Meyer	72 1958
Editor	Mrs R. Mills	Articles for the Magazine may be left at Tonks Bros, 224 Barker St.